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ABSTRACT

This document is a compilation of 68 items that were written by Ohio adult basic and literacy education students and presented at the Fifth Annual Ohio Writers' Conference, which was devoted to the theme "writing and the arts." The compilation is organized in seven sections as follows: (1) choices (8 items, including a poem expressing its author's feelings about having a chronic disease and an essay about a man's journey from a foster home and prison to literacy education); (2) feelings (14 poems and essays revealing individuals' feelings about events and experiences such as death, pregnancy, losing a loved one, and loving two men); (3) people (17 poems and essays recalling people who had made a special impact on the authors' lives, as well as a rap inspired by Edgar Allen Poe's poem "Annabel Lee"); (4) learning (8 poems and essays describing their authors' experiences with and attitudes toward learning); (5) nature (10 poems); (6) places (5 items, including a short story and poems on places in the United States and abroad); and (7) potpourri (6 essays and poems on topics ranging from a cherished pet to childhood recollections). Biographies of the authors and a list of honorable mention authors whose works were not included in the compilation are also presented. (MN)

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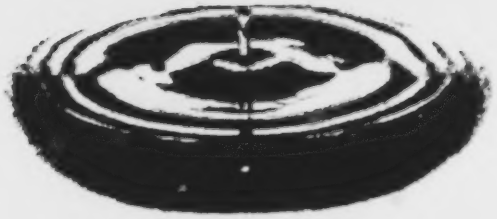

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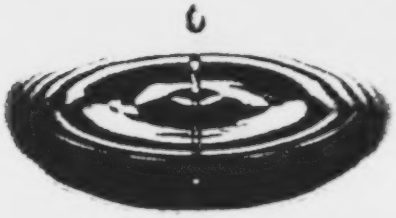

A publication of adult student writing of the
2002 Ohio Writers' Conference

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The Ohio Literacy Resource Center
April 19, 2002

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Did You Know? 11/3/2003
Children of adults who participate in literacy programs improve their grades and test scores, improve their reading skills, and are less likely to drop out. (NIFL Fast Facts on Literacy)

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Foreword

First, we offer our genuine appreciation to all of the students and their teachers who submitted entries for the 5th Annual Ohio Writers' Conference! This year, the OLRC received another extraordinary response of nearly 300 submissions. We commend each student for the time, effort, and creative energy that it took to write, revise, write some more, fine tune a piece of writing, and submit an entry!

The task for the reviewers is a challenging one. We realize that each entry was crafted with care and this edition of *Beginnings*, as is customary, represents multiple anonymous readings by many reviewers. We recognize the efforts of *all* students. Those who submitted entries that are not published in this edition of *Beginnings V*, are listed in the *Honorable Mention* section of this publication.

Warm congratulations to the students whose outstanding entries *are* captured in the pages of this book. We are proud to share their powerful and heartfelt writings in this publication and we wish them the best as they continue to compose their thoughts in creative and artistic ways.

This year's students were honored at the 5th Annual Ohio Writers' Conference, held at the Wyndham Dublin Hotel in Columbus, Ohio. The theme of the conference was "Writing and the Arts." Author, Harry Noden, captured the participants' attention through visual and artistic images, and storyteller, Lyn Ford, engaged the audience in a myriad of entertaining storytelling experiences that fostered a love for the art of speaking, listening, and writing.

We owe a big thank you to *so* many people for their expertise, talents, and foresight in preparing and organizing this volume, as well as the 5th Annual Conference.

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Sincere thanks to: Jim Bowling of ODE for his continued support toward this project; Nancy Padak, the OLRC Faculty Advisor, for her suggestions and expert editorial work; and Marty Ropog, the director of the OLRC, whose technological expertise allowed the reviewers to read and rank the submissions anonymously online.

We also thank the reviewers for this edition of *Beginnings*: Dianna Baycich, Kenan Bishop, Sandra Golden, Judy Hendershot, Chris McKeon, Lori Nuzzo, Nancy Padak, Connie Sapin, and Dale Sherman.

Additionally, many thanks to the staff of the OLRC: Carrie Spence, Penny Graves, and Chris Fullterton, as well as student workers: Jamie Bush, Robin Carver, and Tara Robine. Each person contributed in a special way toward the success of this publication and of this year's conference.

Now, we invite you, the reader, to sit back, relax, and read the entertaining, thought provoking, and often poignant poetry, essays, short stories, and reflections that this group of accomplished writers shares. Enjoy!

Chris McKeon
Writers' Conference 2002 Organizer

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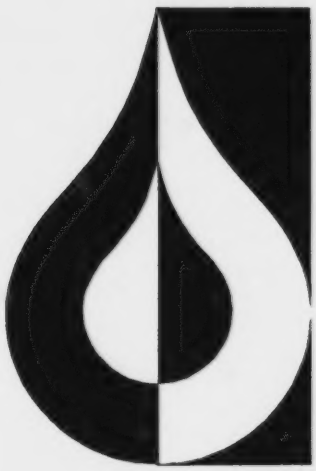
Choices



TODAY IS THE NEW YEAR OF YOUR LIFE

Most people wait until the end of the year to start with a new project or to change a lifestyle. I wonder why people need to wait for a date on the calendar to tell them, "This is the time to begin. "

If you really want to change or begin something, do it now, today, because it is the "new year" for your project. Today is the "new year" for your new lifestyle. Today is the "new year" for all the things you really want to change.

Besides, you never know when it will be the end of the "new year" in your life. Also, you never know if you still have even another year to change.

Don't delay another year! Start your new year today!

Socorro Wood

DISEASE

My disease is a chronic menace to me,
Burning in my head like the pit of my stomach as it absorbs a cup of Hennessey.
A daily struggle with my disease is to overcome every trigger.
This cunning and baffling disease makes me realize, in situations, that I am the only Nigger.

This threat that will be with me for the rest of my life is frightening.
Every flashback that I encounter blasts from nowhere like a storm of lightning.
It tells me every minute of the day that I am nothing but an addict.
But my disease jolts my emotions and my conscience causing overwhelming static.

Even though it tries to discourage me with feelings of guilt and remorse,
I have to make sure that I stay on track and maintain my course.
I am able to accomplish goals, just like any other person,
But I have to watch every step I take to make sure my condition does not worsen.

I wake up sometimes with a deep resentment and feel I cannot survive
Wondering if I can take the next step to keep my will alive.
Sometimes I feel like a pot of clay because everyone else seems to be forming my day.
But these things that I am going through are obviously the price I have to pay.

There is a toll to pay, which is an ultimate cost
To make up for the things I have lost.

My disease tells me to have FEAR, to Forget Everything And Run,
But I have surrendered my disease and I still have FEAR, but now it is Face Everything And Recover, and fix what is undone.

I have severed off the relationship with my disease and I am forming others.
I am trying to regain what I have ruined, like the trust of my mother.
How can her youngest child look upon me to be that responsible older brother?

I cannot do that by myself so I look to my Higher Power.
I choose to call him God because I feel him with me every hour.
He is the only one that has control over my disease because He has kept it from killing me.
I feel now that I am able to renounce it because I am regaining control over my disease.
Now I am learning to live and I am learning not to have resentments.
I do not hold a grudge, I always forgive, and my problems will start to relinquish.

Life is 90% of what comes at me and 10% of what I make it.
I hope not to make my life a hassle, and whatever comes my way, I will take it.

Chris Carter

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COMING OUT OF THE DARK

It could have been you that grew up in a foster home with brothers that did not look like you. But it was not you. It was me. I kept asking myself, "Why me? Why did I have a very strong need to fit in, to be part of the family?" No matter what I tried, nothing seemed to work. Well, I said to myself, if I can't fit in at home, I'll fit in out in the street or wherever I can. Who are my kind? Who are my brothers and sisters? Why did my mother give me up and not the others? Was it because I was born first? Why was I full of rage? Why was I all screwed up at a young age? Was that why I used drugs to escape from the maze?

However, the more I ran, the more I needed to run. I used drugs until it was no longer fun. I went from stealing to home invasion. The plot got more elaborate; it went from car thefts to eyewitnesses, to police court, to judges' decisions, to four to twenty-five years in prison.

In prison, locked up for the first time, I did no work on my alcoholism or my mind. As a result, I'm back on the street, blind. I went right back to drinking and using drugs. I had no clue that I was back on the path of self-destruction. Once again I would find myself robbing, stealing, and doing whatever it took to get my fix. I was in and out of one dead-end job after another and homeless more times than I care to remember. I had no idea of what I was doing to my mind and body. I fell deeper into the abyss of drug addiction. I had days that I could not look at myself in the mirror, but at the same time I reached out for help. Help came in the form of another trip to prison.

When I arrived in prison and had time to reflect, I blamed everyone from the judge on down to the prosecutor and my own mother, until a light came on and I realized that no one else was to blame. For years I had refused to look at what I had done to myself. The question was no longer, "Why me?" but, "Was it me?" My first step was to admit I

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had a problem. When I finally accepted this fact, the second step was to find help. Fortunately for me, there were programs in this prison that I could take advantage of, and I did with great enthusiasm. I learned a lot about myself and why I used drugs and what drugs did to me. I got involved in a group session. At first I didn't want to go because I would have to open up and talk about myself. This was something I did not like doing. However, the more I went to these group sessions and the more I got involved, the more I helped myself and others. I successfully completed the program; I was transferred to a prison closer to home and after one year, I was released.

As preparation for my release, I filled out paper work for college admission and when I was released I went to Cuyahoga Community College-Metro Campus and worked in the cafeteria. I had a car and attended some AA meetings, but I was still hanging around people who drank. I was not doing what the AA program said to do to stay clean. When the time came for me to turn down that drink, I had no defense. I picked that drink up and I was right back where I left off.

How could I forget all the stuff that just happened to me? I tried to cover up the fact that I fell off the wagon, but those people who knew me could tell something was wrong. I was calling off the job, not going to class, and I stopped paying my rent. I lost my job. I dropped out of college and was put out of my house. Now, I found myself drinking more than before, because I did not want to take a look at what was going on with me. The more I drank, the worse things got. After weeks of being on the streets in the cold, reality hit hard and I had nowhere to go. A treatment center shelter seemed like a good place to be. I was off the street, out of the cold, and had food to eat. I had to sit in group and go to meetings seven days a week. In group, I denied the fact that something was wrong with me. I was mad at myself, and I did not want to be in treatment. But the light came on again, and I knew I needed help. Once I admitted I was powerless over

alcohol and my life was unmanageable, I was on my way. I looked forward to going to treatment and made the most of it. I learned that I had to let go of all my old ways. After eight weeks of treatment, I was ready to build my AA program on a strong foundation of regular attendance, getting a sponsor, joining a support group and remembering, "It's one day at a time."

I'm now in literacy education for the purpose of building up my math and communication skills and in time will re-enter college. I hope to become a counselor and help people trying to recover from drug and alcohol addiction. Just thinking that I may have a chance to help other people, as well as myself, makes me feel good on the inside, which is where the healing starts.

Anthony C. Porter

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CHOICES

A path before me,
A choice to make--
Which way to travel,
Which road to take.
A decision ahead,
A fork in the road,
A slow deliberation,
An unknown crossroad.
To take the road
Which to my right lies,
Or to take the road less traveled by.
Whatever the outcome,
The path my feet I send,
I know that each road
Will lead to an end.

Sarah Blair

FLYING HIGH!

I often wonder how far I can fall.
I close my eyes and see my hopes and dreams fade away.
Days go by, and I do nothing at all to stop my fall.
And one day I opened my eyes only to realize I've got wings,
And can fly high!

My hopes and dreams I may have,
But I must work on them to succeed in life.
Learning to flap my wings is just the beginning,
But it's a step up from this long hard fall.
A lesson learned, the weight on my back was not what I thought,
But instead it was my wings to keep me high so that I may not fall.

I shall fly high and soar through the clouds,
For that is why I have wings.
I will not fly too high or ignore my goals,
For my feathers may fall off and I may fall again
With nothing else left to help me.
But I will fly high and try to help others learn as well.

Chong Maynard

DECISIONS AND CHOICES IN MY LIFE

In my teens I decided to leave school and party. I made all the common mistakes including my bad choices in men, friends, places, and people I partied with.

When I was sixteen I started to work. I had a small child to care for. My family was always there for me, but I wanted to be independent, and I was. My life was hard, but I managed. I was always able to obtain employment and make a living. My child grew up, finished school, went to college, and married a good man in real estate.

My father became ill, so I went to Montgomery, Alabama, where he resided at the time, and I cared for him. I met a young man, and we were married. This marriage changed my whole life. After a few years of marriage, the abuse began. It was as if I had entered hell on earth.

My new husband beat me, called me names, and did not allow me to go anywhere without him or one of his family members. He drank everyday, all day. I allowed him to steal my joy and self-worth, but then I found God.

God and prayer saved me from my ex-husband and myself. God is good all the time. He blessed me, and I moved back here to Ohio. He blessed me to find a job. He blessed me with a good and loving family. He blessed me with a car. He blessed me to find this school. God has blessed me to make better decisions in my life. I am thankful, and I give Him all the praise.

Now that I am a woman, I am no longer making the mistakes of my youth. I feel as if the Lord has given me the victory.

Marion Ford

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A SECOND CHANCE TO LEARN

I would like to tell you about my education and how big a tragedy it was for me. I went to Catholic school. I can remember once in the 4th grade when the Sister asked me if I had trouble seeing the blackboard. I said, "No, I can see fine." Sister said, "Benny, I don't think you're paying attention, so I'm going to move you to the front of the classroom." It didn't help me. I didn't do any better whether I sat in the front or the back. If I asked for help, I was told that I hadn't been paying attention. Sister would keep me after school, and I would have to write on the blackboard many times any sentence that I hadn't completed during class.

I passed the 4th grade. I don't know how or why, but I did.

I then became an altar boy, got involved with church activities, and began to play soccer. I would miss classes because Father wanted me to practice soccer or help in the church. Missing classes only made it worse. When I told Father that I needed help with my studies, he would say, "Don't worry. It'll come to you."

Learning never did come easy for me. I was passed from grade to grade without learning how to read and write. I asked my teacher and my family for help, but no one helped me.

I was so frustrated that I quit school at sixteen and went to work.

I married at eighteen and my wife always helped me with any reading or writing I needed.

It was in my senior years that I discovered a one-on-one literacy organization. I have been tutored for about three years. My tutor is excellent in helping me.

I can't praise the program enough for all the help they have provided for me. I no longer feel frustrated, and I enjoy my classes.

Ben Naidznski

REFLECTION

A lone girl, shattered by the world's scorn, smirks at her image ricocheting back at her off a mirrored wall. Filled with hate, her mind tossing in a torrent of unforgiving waves, she bears much pain. Her hope for living, for bringing peace and joy to her life has been torn from her arms and thrown into a gorge, separated by a bridge of splintered boards, bound by torn twine.

The love and joy that once made the days bright enough for the child to walk through have died like a rose that withers under winter's first frost. The girl cries out, yelling that she wants that love back. Her conscious mind does not realize she has had the love all along.

Standing on that lonely bridge of life, the girl looks up and sees a mysterious and intriguing figure beckoning her to follow it. Rising to meet that figure, a strange peace filters through her like the sunlight through a willow's leaves. She looks into the face of the unknown figure, filled with the pictures and knowledge of the light she once knew – a light of happiness and love full of hope and faith. The girl falls back into the arms that once carried her through life's heartaches and pains.

Looking past the brilliant gleam of those wonderful years, she still cannot quite make out the face of that long forgotten protector. Through a bog of despair, she can almost feel that love and joy again. Reaching out, she hopes to grasp this feeling and hold on to it forever, never to let it escape her heart again.

A voice speaks out from across the bay, a voice with a tone unlike that of any kind known to humanity. This mystical voice tells the young woman of a secret only she is to know and to believe. Those hopes and dreams she thought she had lost so long ago have been buried in her heart and will always be kept there, locked away, for only her to know.

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The gentle hands set her back down on the bridge, now free from the loose and tattered boards. Free from the loneliness that once overflowed from her heart, she starts forward immediately to face life's new challenges. The voice of her deceased mother has comforted her and coaxed her from the deep cavern she had shut herself into for so long. The death that held her back has now pushed her forward and taught her to strive for the best, not only in life, but in herself as well.

Amanda Vasbinder

MY HOUSE

My mind, body, and soul are my house, and the inside of this old raggedy house had fallen apart. The outside was even worse, as the brown paint was chipped away. The doors had fallen off, the windows were broken, and, worst of all, the roof was caving in. The foundation was crumbling, so the house was leaning to one side, almost touching the ground.

I had been trying to evict the tenants. My house had gotten too crowded, because of a tenant named Satan, a tenant named Crack, a tenant named Liar, a tenant named Thief, a tenant named Prostitution, a tenant named Hate, a tenant named Carelessness, and a tenant named Charles, my so-called man. They were tearing my house up inside and out. They were going to let my house, my soul, burn up in hellfire.

As the landlord, I decided to stop giving the tenants chance after chance in my life. After praying, I went to the old house and put my foot down. I told them they were evicted and to get out now. Again I prayed and decided to put the house up for sale. As soon as I put up the "For Sale" sign, guess who bought it? My Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Right away He started fixing the house, my mind, body, and soul. He went straight to my mind, to change my way of thinking. He wanted me to think about all the goodness He had given me. He changed my way of seeing, so now I can see clearly that He is the head of my life. He changed the way I talk, so now I can speak His word. He didn't stop there: He went to my heart. I was in need of a new heart. I needed Him to scrub it and wash all the dirt off this broken heart. The heart hadn't loved anybody but those old demons. The heart hadn't cared about the house or those who had cared about the house. So the new owner, Jesus Christ, took that old heart and washed it in His red blood, and it became whiter than snow. He pieced my heart

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together so it can work again. It can forgive those who misuse it. The heart learned to love Jesus Christ, my brothers and sisters, my mother, and everything and everybody that is right in the sight of God.

The house isn't perfect yet. The Lord Jesus Christ is still working on it every day. Jesus and I live in the house and work together on all the repairs left to do. We put up the fence of protection to keep the old, unclean tenants out. When they come to visit, I remind them they are not welcome. I only want good people visiting me now. Jesus took my house out of that old neighborhood and put it on a new foundation. Now it stands with the angels all around it on a Solid Rock, Amen.

May God bless my House.

Rebecca Muldrew

Feelings

R.I.P.

Being a child, the world is yours.
Being an adult, you belong to the world.
As a child, the monsters were under your bed.
As an adult, the monsters govern your city.
When you're a child, everything and anything is possible.
When you're an adult, you wonder if there's a possible cure
for your Alzheimer's.
Money talks.
So did dinosaurs.
Born in diapers.
Die in diapers.
"Why don't you grow up?"
"I feel like a kid again!"
"I'm gonna be a doctor when I grow up."
"Dang old health plan."
"Read me a bedtime story."
"Quit that racket, I'm trying to sleep!"
"Mommy who's that?"
"Here lies the youthful old battle-ax Angela K. Hensley"

Angela K. Hensley

WHY ME GOD?

I went to the doctor and found out that I was pregnant.

My sister found out she was pregnant too.
The due date was the same time, March 3.
During my 3rd month I started to have trouble.

The 4th month I started to bleed.
I had my first miscarriage at home. My sister and mom were with me.
I screamed and cried. I went to the hospital at 6:30 in the morning.
I cried more. I was in pain in my body and in my heart.

When I came home I went into a depression.
I felt sad all the time.
I would not eat or sleep, day or night.
I did not want to talk or look at any one.
My sister is still pregnant.
I am not.
It is real hard for me to deal with.

I live with my sister.

Patricia Horton

PLEASE REMEMBER ME

My sweet angel
Dry up those tears
Put me in your heart
And get rid of all your fears.

I will be there
Every step of the way
And promise me my memory
Will not run astray.

The wind that you feel
Is a kiss on your face
And I know in my heart
Nobody's going to take my place.

Don't cry for me honey
I'm in a better place
Don't let those tears
Ruin that precious face.

Whenever there is joy
I will be there
And just to let you know
I have and always will care.

My little girl
I hope you can see
And when you're in bed at night
Please remember me.

(This poem was written shortly after my father was killed by a drunk driver. I wrote this as if my father were speaking to me.)

Amy Perry

ABANDONMENT

I needed to be loved, but you gave me
no acceptance.
I wanted to be happy, but you brought me
sadness.
I gave you my heart, but you gave me
pain.
I showed you kindness, but you showed me
deceitfulness.
I showed you truthfulness, but you showed me
dishonesty.
I gave you compassion, but you showed me
selfishness.
I treated you like you're important, but you treated me
with disrespect.
I showed you that I wanted you, but you showed me
abandonment.
I gave you all that I am, but that wasn't good enough, so
you turned to another woman.

Karen Smith

TRAPPED BETWEEN TWO

How should I start?
I am trapped between two men.
I am in love with them both.
How would I choose which one is right for me?
I am trapped between two.

One love sits at home and waits for me.
The other one is working.
One loved one makes time for me.
The other one is busy making runs.
I am trapped between two.

I sit in the house watching movies with the man at home.
The other man waits for me so he could take me out to the movies.
I am trapped between two.

While sitting in the house with the man at home we make dinner which is quality time.
The other man waits for me so he can take me out for dinner which is quality time.
I am trapped between two.

I am trapped between two men.
I love them both.
When I need held I can call on them both.
When in trouble I can call them both.
I can call them both for all my needs.
Except, which one should I choose?
I am trapped between two.

I need to make up my mind.
Time is running out.
All eyes are on me.

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What should I do?
I need more time to think.
I need more days to go by.
It has to end now.
No more time.
I will choose myself.
I am trapped between two.

Toreka Miller

THE CONVERSATION

Mind:
Oh heart, why are you crying?

Heart:
It hurts so bad. I feel like I'm dying.

Mind:
What hurts so bad? Tell me what's wrong!

Heart:
The man I love has just strung me along.

Mind:
I hate to see you so sad and blue.
I tried to tell you this man wasn't true.

Heart:
I thought our feelings for each other were true and strong.
And only in his arms I belonged.

Mind:
I wish there were something I could do or say,
To make your sadness go away.

Heart:
But this man is all I can think about.
I feel like he's the one I can't live without.

Mind:
Someday you'll find true love to take away your hurt.
He'll be someone who won't take you for granted or treat you like dirt.

You see Heart, giving him up is something you've got to do.
If you don't, you'll not only lose yourself but me too!

Amy Powell

HAPPINESS IS

...having freedom to speak

...being full of love

...feeling good inside

...a newborn baby

...treating others with kindness

...sharing with others

...comfortable shoes

...not having to lay on the bed to zip your jeans

...giving and helping others

...feeling loved and wanted

...looking into the eyes of a smiling child

...being thankful for all you've got and giving it all you can give!

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PAIN, LOSS, AND HOPE

Sometimes I sit and wonder what's happenin'.
I think about the people who murdered my brother, and all I
can picture is them clappin'.

I get mad and I get angry.
I think about the people who say I need to find someone
to tame me.
But I don't think I need someone to tame me,
'cause all I do is sit.
But when something happens, everyone wants to blame me.
ALL THE STRESS, I AM DEPRESSED, I NEED REST.

Every time I try to sleep, I can hear myself weep.
Thinkin' about the good times and the bad times me and my
brother had.
It makes me feel sad.
ALL THE PAIN.
Every time I think about him,
it rains.
I feel like putting myself down the drain.
I think I am driving myself insane.

All these deaths.
It's not good for my health.
First, my baby,
then my brother,
then my boyfriend.
I wonder, when is my life going to end?

My son didn't even get to open his eyes.
I wasn't able to hear his cries,
change his diaper, or even
go to the market to pick up some diapers.
It's not fair.

It makes me think no one cares about my feelings,
about my heart stitching up and healing.

When my heart started to heal,
once again it started to peal.
I heard the news my boyfriend got shot.
I started thinkin',
how many more people could I lose?
I think God's giving me clues
to be careful
and to think about all the people who were there for me.

Now I can see
what it means when they say,
Cherish your life while you can
'cause you never know when it's going to end.
So I sit and I pray to God
and my brother, my baby, and my lover to watch over me
and
guide me in the right way.

Vincalita Ketcham

WHO'S NEXT?

Why is this world,
In such a mess?
Everywhere you look
You see distress.

Violence, horror,
Anger, shame,
We look at no one
So have no one to blame.

Our children suffer.
Parents cry.
But if we do nothing
Who's next to die?

We've got to be there
For one another,
Black or white
We're sister and brother.

This is a war
We will never win
If we don't come together
And learn to step in.

It may be your child
Who is next to lose.
Are you willing to give that up?
You choose!

Leslie R. Carrier

DARK HEART

Silent dreams and loud sounds
Block my path towards these grounds.
White trees falling from the sky
Block the stars rising up high.
Burning through wood, melting fast
Block every crash, pushing the gas.
Failure, that's what they say
Blocks the mornings of every day.
Crying out, not being heard
Blocks my faith, fighting these curves.
Staying in one place for too long
Blocks all mistakes done wrong!
Blank faces and fake people
Block all souls to every needle
Feelings, corrupting, going insane
Blocks nothing but pain!
Leaves looking orange and brown
Blocks the way, I see a hateful frown.
Silent dreams falling apart
Block happiness towards a dark heart!

Victoria Renderos

WHAT DOES IT MEAN ?

We have learned
to Listen to what the other has to say,
to Learn how to understand each other's needs,
to not Look away, just because we are busy.

We have learned
to Overlook each other's peeves and faults,
to Overcome our own fears,
to not Overtake the other by blame or accusations.

We have learned
to Visualize each other's hopes and dreams,
to Vocalize to each other words of concern,
to not rush, but Venture through life one day at a time.

We have learned
to Encourage each other through every challenge,
to Embrace each other's hardships with empathy,
to not Expect so much...from each other.

Gina Wellspring

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REACHING OUT, TOUCHING OTHERS

I love to do things that help and bring happiness to other people. When I touch someone else, it brings joy to my life.

I remember a good many years ago when a family with ten children started attending my church. The mother did not work out of the home, and the father didn't make a lot of money. They hardly had enough food to eat and lived in a big old house that looked so cold. But they were a loving and caring family. My wife and I would bring one of the children home with us, keep them overnight, and take them shopping for a new dress, coat, or jeans. This would make them happy, and it made us happy to see the smiles on their faces.

I still keep in touch with the mother and father every year by sending a Christmas card. These children are all grown up and have their own families. Years passed, and I learned that two of them had become doctors. A couple years ago I was sitting in church when a young man kept looking at me. After church, he approached me in the lobby and called my name. I said, "Yes, but who are you?" He introduced himself as Phillip and reminded me that my wife and I had bought him his first new coat. He was one of the children from that family. I felt very happy that he remembered me.

Another memory that comes to mind is when I got the big idea of taking ten young boys, nine to twelve years of age, to the Ohio River camping. Did I ever have my hands full! They were full of mischief and very active. I thought it meant nothing to them. In the middle of the night, it began to rain and we had to go for shelter since we had no tent. They were worse than ever. When they were all grown up, I

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bumped into one of them. Dennis reminded me of the camping trip and said, "I know we gave you a hard time, but I will never forget that night. It really did mean so much to me."

Another time, while on vacation traveling on I-75 South through the mountains near Jellico, Tennessee, there was a car stopped along the road and a lady was walking. I stopped and asked if she needed help. She was afraid and concerned about getting in my car, so she asked if she was safe and looked the car over. I kept assuring her she was safe as safe could be. I finally won her confidence by telling her about my children and grandchildren, where I lived, and where I was headed. The lady had failed to get gas before going in the mountains and had a long way to walk before she could find help. I took her to the next intersection where she got gas and drove her back to her car where she was safe. I then followed her to where she had bought gas so I knew she was safe. She could not believe someone would go out of his way like that to help her. After putting gas in her car, she gave me a hug before going on her way.

I was on vacation another time and had every day planned. Then one day was interrupted. My cousin and I had planned this day to spend together, but something happened and she couldn't go with me. So, the day was free. I started the day by wandering through cemeteries and looking at dates and names on markers. I spotted a stone with a name of a person I had known when I was a teen. His wife was still living and I located her and knocked on her door. A voice said, "Come in." At first, when I stepped inside her door, I did not see anyone. Then she spoke. After looking around the dark room, I spotted her in a chair. She was writing letters. I noticed she was not able to care for herself. I explained to her how we had known each other years ago. She began talking to me. Two and a half hours later I found myself trying to leave by backing out her door, one step at a

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time. She was still talking. My day had been interrupted on purpose. That lady needed someone to talk to, and I needed to hear what she had to say. We both were blessed that day.

I always want to be sensitive to the needs of other people and to touch the life of another person. If you need a kind word, then give one. You will receive more than you give!

Arthur L. Massengill

PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN

Looking at the world today, I can say that I am really proud to be an American. Knowing what I know about the other countries and how these countries handle different situations, watching television and seeing the different cultures of the world, I definitely am proud to be an American.

We have the freedom of speech that is not found in other countries. We have the right to voice our opinions about certain issues going on in our country. We Americans have so many advantages. We can buy our own homes. We can go shopping any time we choose. We can do as we please as long as we obey the laws set down by our court system.

Another reason I am proud to say I am an American is that I am able to express my opinion about equal rights! Some Americans don't know how good we do have it. You can't get turned down for a job for the color of your skin, your gender, or your religion. We have the freedom of religion that so many other countries do not have. We have the freedom to bring up our children in the way we choose. We can serve God in the way we see fit.

Therefore, I am proud to be an American. I am proud that in a land of the free, we have freedom of speech, religion, equal rights, and just the plain freedom to be! These things make me very proud of this country. I am proud to be an American!

Pam Tolley

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People

BOO

My name is Billie Jo. I have this cousin named Vance but everybody calls him Boo. He is my best friend. He is always with me and even stays with me in the summertime and on the weekends. My daughter, Paige, loves him to death. He does a lot with her. You would just have to see him with her to really get the picture.

I was sitting at home one day when I got a call that Boo had been in a car accident. I instantly started crying. Nobody knew how bad it was because the police wouldn't give out any information until they talked to his mother, my Aunt Tammy. The family got together at my grandmother's and waited to hear something. Then the phone rang. It was my Aunt Tammy saying Boo was gone.

"Oh my God!" My life just crumbled. I couldn't believe my 16-year-old cousin and best friend left me. I cried for three days before the funeral. The day of the funeral came, and I thought it would be worse on me. To my surprise, the funeral turned out really nice. It helped me. After seeing that he was at peace, I came to terms with the fact that he was really gone. I bought him a flashlight because he was afraid of the dark.

Well, it's been five months since Boo's death, and it's getting a lot easier. I still miss him everyday of my life. I know he is still with us in his own way. I go out to the gravesite and talk to him often. It kind of eases the pain.

Billie Jo Eakle

ANNABEL LEE

A rap inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's poem

Annabel Lee, ooh wee, died near the sea
Her boyfrien' was so hurt he wept endlessly
Many rushing tears
She lived just a few years
A fine young maiden made his heart filled with glee
But she had to go, yo
Her family couldn't find
The doctors had no reason
What the wind had in mind.
Oh she passed away, oh the cold was unkind.

Open your eyes, tell me what did you see?
My GED teacher ran a copy for me
I had to find out about the tragedy
It reminds me of the death of John F. Kennedy
I read the poem oh, yo
It made me cry too
If I didn't know better I'd be mad also.
Why she had to go
I really don't know
I wish I had the cure to clear her throat though.
I saw in the poem that Annabel Lee
Meant so much to her whole community
I have to tell her family to still live in peace
Because Annabel Lee rests near the sea.
Her boyfrien' will always live in grief
That's why my freestyle is surely so brief.

Jessica Crawford

GHETTO GIRLS

Female, Ghetto Female
What does this means?
Do you really understand?

Hard and tough
Acting a trip
Wanting to flip

Gotta lay low
Gotta make a show
Puts on a smile
If she wants attention
Puts on a frown
To keep you away

Cigarettes for a nickel
People out and about
Six people in two bedrooms
Too much conflict inside

Better handle your business
Take care of yourself
Keep everything in check
Know how to protect

Be bout it about yours!
Life's too short, just roll some dice!

Tonshal Butler

THANK GOD FOR GRANDMA

I was only two years old when my mother passed away. I can't really remember her because I was too young. My grandmother used to tell me stories about my mother and what a great woman she was. She always went out of her way to help others.

After my mother passed away my father and my grandmother raised me. I wasn't really told anything until I was old enough to understand. I loved my grandmother and always thought of her as mom. She was there for my sisters and me and loved and took care of us like we were her own.

I'm twenty-seven now, and my grandmother passed away in 2001. I wouldn't trade my childhood for anything in the world, thanks to my grandmother.

Judeleena Wenning

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MY HAPPY DAY

The day my father came home from a prison was the happiest day of my life.

In 1975, after the Vietnam War, South Vietnam was lost. The Communists imprisoned my father because he was a Second Lieutenant Policeman of South Vietnam. At that time, I was seven years old. I missed him so much, and I prayed for him everyday with the hope that he would come home soon. Day after day, month after month, year after year, my mother, three brothers and I waited for good news about him. We hoped and prayed that the Communists would discharge him. We didn't hear anything; we didn't know how long or when he would come home.

One day in December 1980, my father came home from the prison. I was very happy! When I saw him, I could not say anything. My eyes were tearing although I was smiling. I thought my heart would burst with joy.

The day my father came home, my grandfather, aunts, uncles, cousins, and neighbors came to our house to visit my father. Everyone was very happy. My father was busy talking with his guests. Our house was filled with many people and much joy.

After everyone left our house, we had a family dinner together. My father told us many stories. We ate and talked joyfully. I felt so happy because for a long time, I hadn't had a dinner with my whole family.

That was the happiest day of my life. From that day until now, my father stayed with my family. We now can always have dinner together to talk with each other and to share many things.

Anh Phuong Nguyen

GRANDMOTHER'S FLOWER GARDEN

I came from a large family of four girls and two boys. Our grandparents lived in the downstairs apartment, and we lived in the second floor apartment.

During the times that our mother worked out of our home, our grandmother took care of us. We loved and trusted our grandmother, who was a very dear, sweet, Christian lady. We were expected to obey her wishes. She often told us that if we did not obey her, she would report our behavior to our parents and we would be in big trouble and get a spanking.

One of the many restrictions we had was to not go into her flower garden. Her garden was very well kept. She would work the ground; she kept the weeds pulled and kept the larger bushes trimmed so that enough sunlight could get to the blooming plants. It was so well kept that it was very easy for her to tell if anyone or anything, for that matter, had been among the plants.

During the early spring, often after a light snow, the crocuses would pop up in different spots in the yard, showing their colors of bright yellow and purple tones. Soon thereafter, the Lilies of the Valley, with their fragrant little white bell shapes, would appear. We always thought of them as pretty little things; however, they made cute little chains to put around our necks and bracelets for our wrists. We were reminded that they were not to be touched; however, we did not obey and we were in trouble.

Then came the tulips, tall and slender, with little egg shaped blossoms on top. Each day the blossoms seemed to open a little more than they had the day before, then close as the sun went down. They were a mystery to us and, of

course, we had to examine them by pulling the petals off to see the inside. When our grandmother saw petals on the ground, she knew that we had been in her flower garden. She warned us again to stay away from the flowers; however, we were in trouble again.

As the summer months came, we watched the roses grow daily as they climbed the fan-shape trellis. Roses were her favorite. By then you would think that we had had enough scoldings and spankings to just let them bloom and enjoy their beauty. Not so. Who could resist plucking a red rose, smelling a white rose, or putting a yellow one in your hair? What fun it was to pluck the petals, put them all in a box, then throw them up in the air and run under a shower of petals. That did it! We were in worse trouble than ever before. When our parents finished with us, our little butts were so sore we couldn't sit down, and we had to stand at the dinner table that evening.

Now that I am older, I realize the pride and joy our grandmother had in caring for her flower garden and the beauty of it all. It truly was not a place for six mischievous children to explore. I'll never forget my grandmother's flower garden.

Rose M. Buckner

THE FIGHT SHE COULDN'T WIN

It was two years before my sister planned to get married. We were getting things ready and helping her plan for the big day. Betty was feeling really sick. She kept going back and forth to the doctor, but they always said nothing was wrong. Then about a month later she started throwing up blood. We took her back to the doctor, and he found a tumor on her liver. In November of 1991 they took the tumor off and 60 percent of her liver. The doctor said she wouldn't live six to eight months. Betty decided to put the wedding on hold for a little longer. They said she had liver cancer. They started her on chemo right away.

Three months later Betty came home from the hospital. That was February of 1992. She had a tube in her chest. My mother, father or I gave her medication through the tube. We always had to give her medication so her blood would clot and she wouldn't bleed to death.

In July of 1992 the family took a trip to Florida. We went to Cocoa Beach. Betty and I watched the sun go down. The following day we went to the alligator park. A week later we went home. Betty just kept getting worse.

One night Betty, my other sister Jen, and I talked about the past and how we used to sneak guys in our bedrooms. Betty and Jennifer would blame it on me. We made a videotape of us singing and playing around. Then Betty would get sick and start hurting. My mom would make Jen and me go to bed. I would be in bed crying and hear Betty yell and scream in pain. It went on for months. After that, October came along, and it was my sister's 17th birthday. She was in the hospital having chemo done. We had a party for her in Children's Hospital.

December came and we were getting ready for Christmas. I fell asleep one night and woke up having a nightmare of my sister dying, so I went down to her room and watched her sleep. Then Christmas day came, and we all opened our gifts. Betty had to get ready to go back to the hospital for chemo.

The New Year came in 1993. We were all at the hospital getting ready to come home and have a party. Betty, Jen, and I stayed up all night watching scary movies and eating popcorn. We talked about everything. Whoever fell asleep first would get their underwear taken off and put in the freezer. Needless to say I lost that one. My underwear ended up being put in water and then the freezer. Betty and Jen then took them and put them on the tree in our front yard for everyone to see. Everyone and their brother saw my underwear. I have never been able to live that down to this day.

On April 13th, Betty became very ill, and we had to call the ambulance to come and get her. She fell into a coma on April 16th. She woke up long enough to tell us she wanted to go home. I was by her bedside all night and all day. Then on April 18th I was holding her hand; she opened her eyes and looked at me like she was telling me goodbye. I grabbed her and said it's going to be all right and said, "I love you sis." She grabbed my hand tight and died in my arms. She never gave up; it was just a fight she couldn't win.

Paulina Foor

I AM

I am a man who is looking for a job.
I wonder if anyone has read my resume?
I hear the sound of my phone like the ring of hope.
I see the open doors of a company welcoming me.
I want to get a comfortable interview.
I am a man who is looking for a job.

I pretend once a day that I got that job as a designer or drafter.
I feel so happy as if I won a special lottery.
I touch my keyboard to draw an object like a pianist plays a song.
I worry if the company will keep me working for them or not.
I cry when I hear of people losing their jobs and businesses after September 11th.
I am a man who is looking for a job.

I understand it takes a long time to get a job.
I say to myself, "Calm down, you will get it later."
I dream I will become a good designer.
I try to do my best to get and keep that job.
I hope to get a job that will use my newly acquired computer skills.
I am a man who is looking for a job.

Cong Luong

THE LONELY OAK TREE

The oak tree stands proud among the other trees in the woods. But on one lonely day, the oak tree stood alone even though the other trees were there weeping with sorrow. For the oak had lost a precious child, a little girl.

She was brought into their cruel world and taken away breathing only one breath of air. Does the tree shake or weep with sorrow, or does he stand strong to keep the other trees from breaking down and falling with despair? The mighty oak stands alone, strong for the other trees, although he was trembling and weeping inside for the loss of his precious child.

I know of the oak, for the oak is me. I stood alone with a sorrow in my heart for my precious little girl I'll never forget. Every time I see a mighty oak standing in the woods, proud and strong, it will remind me of the day I lost my precious little girl.

In Memory of Kayleen Chevelle Eaton
Love, Daddy

Louis Eaton

A SPECIAL LADY

You are a star shimmering in the night;
Upon the dark lake's waves you shine so bright.
You cradle my hope in your hand when my life seems so lost,
Like a flower's relief escaping the frost.
Life is like nature so cold then warm;
On a sunny spring day along comes a storm.
The wind so harsh, the rain so cold,
Coming down like needles until the green leaves fold.
You have taken the baby birds and taught them to fly,
Yet you know the day will come when they all say goodbye.
You'll set them free perched up so high
Like a beautiful orange-lit sunset leaving the sky.
Leaving with a smile, memories of a happy face,
In your heart they all hold a special place.
You've touched so many lives,
Yet you've chosen this life of obstacles and strife.
You teach your students to never give up.
If you only taste the tea grounds, you'll never drink the cup.
No one can ever repay you for everything you give,
They can only use what you taught in the way they live.
This instructor who cares for so many,
This goes out to a special lady named Jenny.

Thank You!

Wendy Martin

A SPECIAL GRANDFATHER

I wish I could spend a day with my Grandfather So. In my native country, South Korea, my grandfather was a hero. When the Japanese took over South Korea, my grandfather was beaten to death in a concentration camp. He was only thirty-five years old. Every March first, the Korean White House sends a gift to my family in honor of him. There is a six-foot cement plaque honoring him in Kang Yong City, which is near my parents' home. The plaque tells the story of my Grandfather So, and how he fought for his country. Other men he fought and died with are also honored. When I was little and would pass this plaque on the way to school and the market, I would feel special because I was his granddaughter, the granddaughter of a South Korean hero.

Because I never met him, I wish I could spend time with him so I could tell him how proud I am of him.

Kum Sun Kim

MY GRANDMA AND GRANDPA

My Grandma's name is Dessie Pearl Clark. She was born in Kentucky on April 13, 1913. My grandma was saved at the age of 13. She loved going to church. She loved to read her Bible, and she loved to pray. My grandma did a lot of praying.

When my grandparents met, my grandpa was not a Christian, but my grandma changed that. They were married, and my grandfather worked and worked. My grandfather became a minister, and he preached all over. My grandma told me that when my mother, Jeanine, was little they lived in a tent for a while. My grandma told me when they lived in the tent, she was praying and she saw a vision of God. And all of us grandkids believed her. That was amazing to us.

All of us grandkids called our grandparents Nannie and Pa. When my grandparents bought a house, my grandfather built his first church. The name of the church is Pleasant Valley Church of the Nazarene.

All of us grandchildren loved to go to church and listen to my grandfather preach. And when they sang, you could hear my grandma. She had a high voice. I liked to hear her sing "Amazing Grace."

When my grandparents went to Kentucky, I would go with them. I loved that. One time, my grandma had an old dog. It chased me around the house, and I screamed. My grandma gave me honey to calm me down.

My grandfather became a life insurancer. I remember one time we were driving, and you know how some highways have a road going around? My grandpa said, "Susie, I went roun' the ben'. Did you see Ben"? I laughed.

My grandparents were married for 50 years. They lived a good life. My grandma died August 16, 1989. She had a disease called Parkinson's. It is a disease in the bone that eats up the bone. It will make you shake. That disease was what took my grandma.

My grandfather suffered badly when he lost his wife. We took care of him. He became sick, and five years later he died. There is something I will never forget. When my grandpa was sick in the hospital, Saint Elizabeth's, we went to see him. I told the nurses if anything goes wrong call me. One week later I got a phone call about 3:00 in the morning: "You need to get here." I tried everything. I had no money and no way to the hospital. I went to my friend's house. She gave me money for a taxi, but it took too long so I had to wait for a bus. By the time I got there, he went into a convulsion and died. The doctor said he didn't suffer. This lady asked me if I wanted to see my grandfather. I said yes, I want to say goodbye, and I did for me and my mother. I kissed him and hugged him and said goodbye.

Susan Fisher

CHILDREN

They make you laugh
When you want to cry.
They give you comfort
When you have pain.
They keep you awake
When you want to sleep.
They bring you up
When you are down.
They keep you going
All day long.

Shalisa Nash

MEET SARAH. SHE IS SPECIAL, JUST LIKE YOU

Let me introduce someone special. This is Sarah. She is eight years old, an individual with special needs. Do you know who I am? I am the mother of Sarah.

Oh, you saw her at school. Are you asking who is that person usually with Sarah at school? She is Mrs. Red, the educational interpreter. That means she is a qualified sign language interpreter. She helps Sarah learn at school, just like your teacher Mr. Blue or Mrs. Yellow does, but in a different way.

Oh, you see Sarah playing with her hands a lot? Those particular hand movements, fist brush down against her hair from top of head to over the ear, are a sign for her name, "Sarah". And bending fist up and down a few times means "yes". She must be saying that she was agreeing with someone or something. As you see she can say some words but saying the sound of /s/ is hard for her. Well, not only the sound of /s/, she has great difficulty saying many sounds or words. When she can't articulate words or sounds, she uses sign language. Maybe you can help her learn to speak by talking slowly and clearly.

Do you wonder is Sarah deaf? No, she can hear just like you. She can hear well--even little whispering that I did not hear. I found out by a hearing test at the University of Akron. She just can't talk like you. Sometimes she does not respond right away as you do. But don't feel bad. Sometimes it takes her a while to understand what she is hearing, so you need to wait for her by counting to ten. It will be helpful if you talk to her when she is looking at you, so she can understand you better. She is a visual learner.

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Huh, you think it's not fair Sarah has her own computer toy at school? Well, that dark pink square with the touch screen is not a toy. It is an Alternative Augmentative Communication tool. That device named "e-talk" is programmed with words, sentences, or music. Sarah uses it to communicate with people just like you use your voice.

Do you know how many ways she can ask for something from me? She can say words, which are hard to understand. She can ask in signing or finger spelling where she spells every single letter with her fingers. She can type words in the computer (or on the typewriter) just like the way she takes spelling tests in her 2nd grade class. She may be able to write with a marker, but her handwriting is not legible. She can use "e-talk" to speak for her. Or she can take my hand to show me what she wants, just like your little sister or brother does.

There are different ways to talk. What is the most important thing to communicate? I think it's from my heart to your heart, your heart to Sarah's heart. When I look into your eyes, I can see how you feel. You can see how Sarah feels. Sometimes, you don't need to say it. Sometimes you might be able to feel when someone needs a gentle hug, or a big bear hug. Treat others as you want to be treated. Is it hard to do?

Sarah likes to play, to dance, to do 200-piece puzzles, to go to school, to take field trips especially to the aquarium or beach! She likes to go swimming (even though she can't swim); she likes walking in the park. She enjoys reading books, listening to music, and watching movies with popcorn or candy. She loves McDonald's or Burger King, Sailor Moon, Powerpuff Girls, Digimon, and Disney.
Do you like those things just like she does? Then you could do the same things together, as friends. Helping and sharing

something with someone is very special, and it makes you feel happy.

You are special. Sarah is special. Each of us is someone special.

Fumiko Adair

YES, JOHNNY, THERE IS A SANTA CLAUS

My 9-year-old son and I had just snuggled up together within our oversized easy chair to watch the classic animated Christmas show, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town.* As we watched with familiarity, knowing exactly how it ends, out from his lips popped the inevitable question, "Mommy, is Santa Claus real?" Thinking quickly, I remembered how I had handled this situation when dealing with my older daughter's curiosity.

All the while, I was aware of the fact that I would be asked to reaffirm my response with a "Promise to God, Mommy?" You see, in my house when we must know if a person is being truthful, we often check by asking the person to promise God; you *never ever* break a promise to God, so if the truth cannot be told, then the promise to God cannot be made.

As I stammered and searched for my words, I felt his wide eyes intently fixed on mine. I said, "Yes Johnny, there *was* a Santa Claus, and that story on TV is true; but you know that no one lives forever. Santa Claus lived for a long time, and he did many wonderful things for both children and adults. People were so sad when he died that they started doing the things that Santa had done. They began to help other people and sneak toys and gifts into children's socks that were hanging up to dry on the fireplace. Then, it just kind of took off from there."

Johnny's dark brown eyes were swollen, damp, and still beckoning with question; I knew I had to continue.

"As the years went on, parents everywhere just kept tradition going in the name of Santa Claus and all that he stood for."

"So... YOU are Santa Claus?" he asked with revelation.

"Yes, and isn't it wonderful that it keeps going on and on?"

As he agreed, I quickly chimed in as I could tell there were hints of doubt or sadness, "How would you like to help me play Santa Claus this year?" His eyes lit up like a Christmas tree.

"Yes!" he squealed. I explained to him that there is a family nearby that did not have much, and their children would not be able to have very many Christmas presents that year. We could be Santa and buy some toys, wrap them up, and put them into a red bag. Next, Johnny's job would be to leave the bag at their door, ring the bell, and run as fast as he could before being spotted. The mere thought of this idea excited him so much that he couldn't wait to begin.

I will always remember the Christmas of 2001 as the year that Johnny learned that there really is a Santa Claus, and Santa will live in Johnny's heart from this day on.

Rebecca Morehouse

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

As I was leaving for school, I started out the drive. I forgot something, so I pulled back up. I got out of my car. I heard a tire squeal and looked up and saw a car flip in the air. I took off running to the vehicle. There were two vehicles – one upside down. I ran to one and the person inside was alive. I told him not to move; I had help coming. I ran over to the other vehicle. I noticed it was a young blonde-haired girl. She wasn't moving. Her car was torn in half. I felt for a pulse and could not get one. I looked around for someone to help me, but no one was around yet. I felt scared, but I knew I had no time to lose. Every minute was critical with no time to waste. I began to talk to her, rubbing and patting her leg, telling her to hold on. I was going to help her. I had air care coming. I felt this closeness to her and yet, I felt so helpless. I tried to do CPR on her. I believed her neck was broken and her condition was very serious.

I looked up as I heard a voice say, "There's nothing you can do, she is dead." It was a neighbor who came out of her house. She had paramedic experience. I told her this was someone's child, and I couldn't quit. I had to try and save her. I continued to talk to her and pat her, assuring her I was there with her in case there was some kind of chance. The life squad and the police came and asked me to move away from her. I told them I couldn't leave her yet. I still needed to do something. The police walked me away from her, and I began to pick up all the things that were thrown from her car – her air freshener, her make-up, papers, stuffed toys, deodorant, broken items. I gathered them together and went to hand them to a police officer. He told me they didn't care about that junk. I felt hurt because, as a mother, I knew those items would mean something to her mother.

I stood there in shock and felt so helpless. I kept retracing my every step in my mind and asking myself if I could have done something different to save her. I cried all day and was so distracted and felt so empty. I went to my doctor's office and told her the story. She told me the girl was a patient of hers, and she was her mother's only child. She then asked me if I would talk to her mother, that she would want to talk to me.

I told the mother I gathered up all her things in a bag and had them at my house, along with a picture of her I found in the ditch later. The mother had a lot of questions for me. I answered all of them the best I could. She asked me how soon I got to her. I told her as soon as the car landed. She said, "God bless you. I didn't want her to die alone." I assured her that she didn't, that I was there with her. She thanked me over and over again and told me I was her daughter's guardian angel, sent to be with her as she passed through this life so she wouldn't go alone. I told her I was there holding her hand and God was on the other side holding the other. Later I had learned that I had fixed her hair for last year's prom and the picture I found in the ditch was her prom picture.

I don't know the reason for me being there, but I'm now glad I was there to be her guardian angel. I will always wonder if I was sent from God to be with her.

Vickie Hargraves

A FATHER'S LOVE

Before you bring a child into the world, the love of its father is already present. During the nine months of pregnancy, a father can feel the baby's love close to his heart.

As a newborn takes its first breath of air, the joy of happiness runs down a father's face. As friends and family come to see the new child, a proud happy father shows him off to the world for the first time.

The first time a father holds his child, you can see the love of the child and feel the bonding that occurs. As he holds his child and they make eye contact, you can see the bonding occurring.

When the day comes to take the new family home, the new father's love for his child is so great that it looks like he is walking on air.

After a long hard day of work, a father comes home to his child, sits down, and rocks him to sleep. As the child sleeps in a father's arms, he sings to his son, a song of his love for him.

When a child takes his first steps, a loving father is there to help him so he doesn't fall. As the child learns to walk, his father is always there for him.

When a child starts to talk, a proud father is present to listen to him. It's one word, then two, and then it's a small sentence. If a child becomes sick, a father is there with his love to nurture him back to good health.

As a child starts to ride a bike for the first time, a father is there beside him to help if he is needed. All summer long that

father watches his son play and ride his bike so if his son needs him he will be there.

Now it is the first day of school, and a little boy gets on the bus for the first time. Tears run down the father's face. He knows that his little boy has grown up, and he can't be by his side to help him. The little boy may look back and say, "It's OK dad. I love you."

After the first day of school is over a little boy runs up to a father with a book in his hand. "Dad, can you read to me now?" "Yes, son," as the young boy jumps into the Dad's lap with a book. The Dad starts to read to his son like he did before. Then the boy says, "Dad, are you sure that's what the words are on this page?" "No son, I can't read very well." "That's OK, Dad. I will be by your side to help you, if you need me Dad." As time goes by, the love of a father and son grows as they learn to read together.

Dale D. Sherman

Learning

LEARNING

Learning
They said that I could not learn. They almost made me believe it, too.
Learning
But I know that learning is a part of my life. And without learning I cannot go through.
Learning
A greater confidence I've now gained, full of knowledge. I never knew that with faith in myself and trusting God above there is nothing that I cannot do.
Learning
Now with this new knowledge, I can go around the world through books. Now I can read and write.
Look out success!

Gloria Turner

STUDENT

Lazy Young

Teaching Learning Reading

Practical Diligent

Pupil

Slowomiv Chmielewski

HOW THE GED CHANGED MY LIFE

The GED program has given me the strength and courage to follow my dreams. The program has increased my confidence level, and it has given me a strong sense of self. I know now I can reach my ultimate goal. Today, I am a better person, mother, and grandmother. I feel I can be a mentor to those who are going through issues and problems similar to those I have gone through because I have a better understanding of me. I realize now that I am very fortunate to have the love of my family and teachers who are helping me at this point in my life. And I am very blessed to have such wonderful people in my life to encourage me to fulfill my dreams.

The GED program is a Godsend to me. All one needs to do is just enter the classroom door. When I took that first step, the world unfolded. And even though it may not seem like much to some, it was a beginning to me. I felt that many doors opened up for me, which I believed were closed before.

Carol Radcliff

EXAM ANTICIPATION

1/5/02 Saturday 4:50 a.m.

The night is quiet except for a few modern sounds. The sound of the TV, barely audible; the ticking of the clock; the clicking of the furnace; in the distance, a car passing through town on a main street. Most are sleeping. I lie awake, waiting. It has been two weeks since the exam. Did I pass all the subjects? The Science was the hardest. Was my knowledge correct? Did I guess right on the unknown?

As each day nears, the mailbox takes on a life of its own. Its presence is well known on a continual basis. It seems bigger, brighter, louder. Will it be the bearer of great tidings? Will it bring bad news, slowing down the progress of my goals?

I have procrastinated for 23 years. I finally took my GED exam. It didn't bother me all those years. I just pushed it from my mind, "I'll do it later." Later is 23 years to me.

Now I have waited for two short weeks, and they feel longer than 23 years. What is the ultimate outcome: did I, didn't I? The agony of wonder is much worse than actually taking the test.

If I didn't make it, I will start over and try again. I will not wait 23 years. I will do it now. For now is where I live. Eventually now will be career school. Then my career.

From now on my goals don't sit on a shelf in the back of my mind. I keep them dusted and shining with hope of accomplishing them. For what I do now is important. Not yesterday or tomorrow, but NOW.

Now, I wonder as I wait -- where is my exam? On a desk, in a stack, in a mail room, on someone's pile they'll get to someday? Only 12 more hours. I can check the mailbox again. The mailbox will speak to me. "Yes, I deliver what you want" or "No, I do not have it." When finally it appears, the envelope will be a breath of anxiety. "Is it thick or thin?" I must stare at it. I must open it.

Yet, I still wait.

Kathleen Fields

TO PROJECT: LEARN

I have been coming here to Project: LEARN for some time now.

Each time I come it is in my heart and soul to learn what I can. I am always trying to get something out of every setting. In every class I try to take home something, even if it's only one word. I learned from my father's farm you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him or her drink the water.

So what I am trying to say is there is plenty of water at Project: LEARN if you want to drink it.

Russell Walker

AUTUMN THE APPLE'S FIRST WEEK AT A NEW SCHOOL

A Fantasy about Food

Today was Autumn the Apple's first day at school. She had just changed schools, and now she had to make new friends. Autumn the Apple sat at her desk wishing she was back in Farmland with her old friend, Mary the Mushroom. While Autumn the Apple was sitting at her desk, Brittany the Broccoli Head came up to her and asked her if she could sit next to her. Of course, Autumn the Apple said yes.

Over the next couple of days, Brittany the Broccoli Head and Autumn the Apple became really good friends. The next morning, the teacher came into the classroom and said, "Class, we have a new student today." In walked Mary the Mushroom, Autumn the Apple's friend from Farmland.

Boy, you should have seen Autumn the Apple's face light up as bright as a star in the sky! They both gave each other a really big hug. Now Autumn the Apple is really happy; she has her two best friends, Mary the Mushroom and Brittany the Broccoli Head, and they all lived happily ever after.

(Teacher's note: This story was written for the writer's preschool daughter, as part of a unit on nutrition.)

Melinda Barnes

MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

When I was 19, I enrolled in a GED class called Even Start, which is a family education program. Even Start is for parents who need their GED or need to "freshen-up" their skills and who have a child under the age of 7. The program also includes parenting skills along with academic studies. I took the GED test in May 2001, when I was 20, but was just shy of passing it.

In November 2001, I took the test again and waited for six weeks for the results to come; those six weeks felt like an eternity. When I did receive the results, my mother would not let me read it. She read the diploma aloud, and I got up from where I was sitting and read it myself. I was shocked when I read it. I thought I would never get my diploma. I did.

Three days later, when I went to school, I asked my teacher, Lory, if she wanted to make a copy of my diploma. She said, "Of course, Brandi." The next day, my teachers and the coordinator of Even Start gave me a card, a cake, and a balloon that said "Congratulations." I was so embarrassed; my face was so red.

Now I am going to further my education by becoming a cosmetologist, my ultimate dream. No matter what people think of me, I can and will achieve my dreams and make them real. Finally, I am now a graduate. I am so pleased with myself.

Brandi Murphy

THE CAREGIVER

I walk to the mailbox again today, hoping that when I open it I'll find the results of my GED test and find that I have passed. As soon as I get the results, I will enroll in the course, cosmetology, something I've always wanted to do. Now, finally I am taking the opportunity I've always hoped for.

As I think back over my life, I've always taken care of everyone else but myself. I was raised on a sharecropper's farm where they grew cotton, soybeans, and corn. That was back when everything was done by hand in the fields. Everyone in the family had to work in the fields to earn a meager living. After working hard all day, we would go home and feed the chickens, milk the cows, and slop the pigs. After that was done, we carried in water for the night and the next day. One of the adults had to chop the firewood. We children had to carry the firewood into the house because we cooked all of our meals on a wood cook-stove. After supper, Janice and I would wash the dishes. We were all dead tired after such a long day of work and chores.

We all lived in this big, old house. At one time it had been a schoolhouse. Now it housed our family of fifteen people that included parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and siblings.

When I was about five and a half years old, my mother, Sally, died of cancer. It was the saddest day of my life. I couldn't believe my mother was gone. My heart longed for her hugs and kisses, the comfort of being held in her lap, and the smell of her hair.

It wasn't long after mother died, that Dad remarried a woman named Sue. She had a little girl who was too little for me to play with, although I was big enough to help take care of her.

Over time, Dad and Sue kept having children, until there were six of us. Because I was the oldest, I had to take care of them all of the time: bathe them, change their diapers,

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and wash their clothes on an old rub board. I also had to play with them, keep them happy, and out of Sue's way. Sue didn't like having so many children. I thought when Dad remarried, I'd have a new mother. Dad had a new wife, but Sue never wanted to be a mother to me. If it hadn't been for my Grandmother Rosie, who gave me lots of love and attention while I was growing up, I would not have experienced unconditional love from an adult. My grandmother was there for me all of her life until she passed away. That was long after I married and had children of my own. It was Grandmother who taught me the things I needed to know, to become an adult.

By now my parents had eight children and the workload just kept increasing. I loved my sisters and brothers, but I didn't like taking care of them all of the time. There was never any time for myself. Dad wouldn't let me go anywhere or do things with kids my own age.

Dad didn't believe in us kids going to school very much either. Dad never went to school at all, so he believed that if he got by without it, so could we. He kept us out of school so much that we couldn't pass from one grade to the next. I failed third and fourth grades, because Dad kept us out of school too many days in order for us to pass. There was one whole year we didn't go to school at all. This put me three years behind; I was now three years older than all my classmates. When I finally entered the eighth grade, I was almost sixteen.

Then I did a stupid thing with some friends at school. We all decided to skip school for the day and play hooky. We didn't do anything bad; we just hung out together and talked about teenage stuff. When we went back to school to catch the bus home, we all got caught and we all got expelled for two months. After that, Dad wouldn't let me go back to school at all. Since I was sixteen then, the law couldn't make him do it.

I really felt trapped now! Things at home had been bad enough before. Now that I couldn't go to school

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anymore, I felt like there wasn't any hope for me to get the education I wanted so much. Now that I had to be at home all the time, I never got to see or talk to kids my own age. I had to find a way to get out!

One day while my parents were at work my cousin, Louise, and her boyfriend drove out to our house. They brought a guy with them who wanted to meet me; he paid a lot of attention to me that day, attention I was starved for. Within a month we were married.

We stayed with my parents for two weeks while we looked for a place of our own. I was giving the house a good cleaning, doing the laundry, and putting the clothes away. When I got to Dad's room and opened the dresser drawer to put his things away, I saw a letter addressed to me. This was a letter I had not seen before; it was from a boarding school that I had applied to, with help from Aunt Lola. I was to work part-time to pay for my room and board and Aunt Lola would pay for the rest of my school expenses. It said that I had been accepted and how and when to register for school. My heart sank! I was furious at Dad for keeping this letter from me. I didn't love Jerry, a man I barely knew. I did it just to get away from home. I couldn't believe it! Once again Dad had stolen my education from me. Had I seen the letter in time, I would not have gotten married.

Of course the marriage didn't last; the only good thing about it was my three beautiful children, two girls and a boy. Eventually I did meet someone that I loved and who loved me in return. He adopted the children, and now we are a family.

Over the years we had our ups and downs, but we always found positive ways to resolve our differences. Then my mother-in-law became terminally ill and required full time care. She refused to go into hospice care. What she wanted was to stay with us and be where we could take care of her with comfort and support. Once again, I became the primary caregiver because she wasn't able to do anything for herself, and she wanted only me to do things for her. She was in great

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pain and said that I was real gentle with her. Five months later she died at home like she wanted.

Time passed. Our children were all grown-up and on their own now. Our oldest daughte. had married and divorced several times. Her husband at the time became physically abusive to her children, and he went to jail over it. The state got involved with their case and wanted to put the children into foster care. Our daughter asked my husband and me to take the children, so we went to court and got legal custody. Once again, I became the caregiver for someone else's responsibilities. When would it be my turn?

Then one day I realized the only person standing in my way was me. I now had the time and the opportunity to go back to school. All I had to do was take that first step, and I did just that. I enrolled in a class to study for my GED. It felt really good to be in school again. The teachers inspired me to keep going and not give up. I studied hard every day. I finally took the GED test; now I'm just waiting for the results.

I walk to the mailbox again today! Would this be the day? I reached in and took out the stack of mail looking for that one special envelope that would give me the answer I wanted. Yes, it came! I opened the letter and inside was my diploma. I had passed the test. Now it is my time!

Barbara S. Hall

Nature

LIVING IN THE COUNTRY

I think it is definitely better to live in the country.
I sit here looking out the opened windows;
Spring is introducing itself.
I hear the birds singing their happy, upbeat songs.
I hear the whisper of the trees
As they sway gently from side to side.
There's a hustle to the busy creek,
Rushing to its destination.
This, all of this, tells me I am in peace.
This is the solitude of Mother Nature.
The country possesses all of Mother Nature;
From season to season she will show you a different portrait.
I guess you could say Mother Nature lives in the country.
At least she lives more easily in the country than in the city.
Here, she is free, and the country runs with her in freedom.
I sit here; I watch all this go by and feel blessed.
Blessed I am in the country, blessed that I am here at all.
I am happy to live in the country.
Now feeling free with it.
Free in God's country.
I sit and realize that no one could take this blessed moment away.
I never want to leave the country.
I never want this peaceful feeling to fade.
Not ever.

Angie Bloomfield

JUNE

It's yellow roses, it's colorful flowers,

It's body suit-wearing, sand castle-making days!

It's sunny, hot, stuffy.

It's sunshine.

Jennifer Burlile

STORM

Wavy Rainy

Blowing Running Cooling

Windy Foggy

Weather

Mastan Singh

RAIN

Transparent Cold

Falling Dripping Drizzling

Wet Dirty

Water

Sumaya Claridge

SUMMER

Sandy Sunny

Life Saving Swimming Diving

Wet Hot

Beach

Flavio Cenderelli

SEA

Blue Salty

Waving Crashing Sailing

Wet Restless

Ship

Viktor Sayevych

WINTER

Cold Slippery

Snowing Melting Driving

Beautiful Dangerous

Season

Sagat Kouchkoumbaev

APPLE

Red Yellow

Growing Falling Squeezing

Sweet Sour

Juice

Csaba Gregor

WINTER

Cold Mild

Snowing Driving Skiing

Joyful Difficult

Winter Olympics

Roman Ostrowski

NATURE'S TREASURE

A butterfly is like a floating rainbow

And gentle as a mother's touch.

Its wings are a mosaic pattern of soft colors.

Butterflies fly gracefully as a bride

Gliding down the aisle on her wedding day.

A butterfly brings peace and joy to my heart.

Marie Davis

Places

A LAKE TALE THAT HAS THE IRS REFUSING COMMENT

Once again the silence has been stirred in one of the Internal Revenue Service's oldest, most exhaustive, and most comprehensive cases. The IRS was reluctant to give any details for years. The evidence increasingly indicates that the agency still has a strong desire to solve this mysterious maritime puzzle.

Subsequent developments occurred with the passing of a local man obsessed with history who took with him vital clues to the investigation that began over three decades ago. He had been the key figure in an IRS investigation looking into missing artifacts from the War of 1812. Issues of conspiracies, secret files, and well-hidden clues again came to their attention. The events that unfolded during the original and subsequent investigations began in the early part of the 1970's.

As I sat at the mortuary paying my respects, an old gentleman sat down beside me. I did not recognize him, but he seemed to know me. He leaned towards me and in a low whisper, he began by saying, "I guess the story can finally be told." This captured my attention and deepened my interest. I will now share with you his interpretation of what transpired.

After a failed business defaulted on loans and federal taxes, an official inquiry was launched by the IRS regarding unbelievably rare artifacts that were listed as collateral on several bank loans. The IRS intent was to confiscate these historic items for unpaid federal taxes. The list was quite extensive. The most priceless relics consisted of items used by Commander Barclay and his men of the British Royal Navy, on Sept. 10, 1813, during the Battle of Lake Erie.

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When the IRS agents came to this lakeshore community to interview the various bank officials involved in the loans, to their dismay they were met with many closed doors and withheld records. This treatment only fueled the agency's case. Limited press coverage at the time had people captivated by the list of items. When the IRS held the inquiry and questioned the individuals involved, their personal accounts varied, by design or accident, to the extreme. The oddly conflicting testimony disclosed nothing to unravel the mystery of the location of the items. This led the agency to believe that all were involved in a conspiracy and scheming.

Thus began one of Lake Erie's greatest mysteries. The agency had always felt that the key figure in the case had hidden the items in an attempt to prevent them from being taken back to Washington, DC, by their agents. He was a renowned legend among historians for his knowledge about the Battle of Lake Erie. Many believe he was the chronicler and curator of the lake's history. His work will remain for years as the standard on the subject. With expertise and a reputation for accuracy and reliability, he was an individual that thrived on detail. Combining this with his enthusiasm, he could not be held back in his pursuit of history.

Although he kept a reclusive lifestyle, when he spoke about an event in history, one could only wonder if he somehow had been present. He knew how to find that "porthole" into the past and possessed the rare ability to acquire historic artifacts that were virtually unobtainable to others. A man of past vision and insight, he was a master of his craft. It was very fortunate for local history lovers that he preserved the heritage of many of the lake's treasures before they passed into oblivion. He felt it his destiny to care for these items so future generations could learn from them. He took this legacy very seriously.

Even after the main investigation, the IRS agents continued to comb through every document available. After significant amounts of effort, under duress, and in desperation, they finally came to the conclusion they still had no evidence! Years passed, but the IRS remained determined. In their pursuit of solving the mystery and finding the items, they refused to close the case. They harbored no illusions about monitoring indiviuual bank accounts, keeping people under surveillance throughout the years, visiting local museums, and monitoring Maritime Antique Auctions across the country. Several times they used shadowy figures to approach collectors with discreet inquiries in an attempt to seek out any of the items, price always being no object.

In July, 1975, acting on what the agency considered a solid lead through an informant's note, they launched an extensive search using a U. S. Navy Dive Team. They searched an area northwest of Rattlesnake Island. The note indicated the items had been returned to the site of the battle. After days of continuous diving, the Navy's efforts were in vain. They realized they had been duped.

Until recently, still sensitive, they refused to publicly acknowledge the items are sought by the agency. The case once again echoes into the present. Speculation is that because the case still rubs a sore spot with the IRS, a cash reward may be forthcoming for anyone who provides valuable information leading to the recovery of the items.

As the old man finished his story, I was preparing to leave. As he shook my hand, he pressed a small piece of paper into my palm. Once outside, I unfolded the wrinkled paper and revealed a receipt from an Army-Navy surplus store in Cleveland. Listed was the sale of seven Navy water-tight containers dated Sept. 10, 1975. At that point it occurred to me. Who had outfoxed whom? Death may have

ended a life, but not the shroud of mystery surrounding one remarkable historian.

Philip Edwards

ALMOST HEAVEN

In 1925, in a little coal-mining village in West Virginia, there was a baby boom. Five baby boys were born to five different famil' s: Homer Casey, Roosevelt Anderson, Rush Moorer, Richard Cunningham, and yours truly, Claude Victor Berry. We all grew up together. We were wild, young, and free. We didn't have anything that the world would call wealth, but we were happy with what we had.

As young boys often do, we tried to mimic the men around us. This was during the Depression, and jobs were scarce. Most of the men around there worked in the coal mines two days a week. We all thought it would be fine to work in a mine too. When the men left for the mines we headed for the hills to dig our own mines. We left early in the morning and were gone all day. After a while our parents began to wonder what we were doing all day long. We had to come clean and tell them. By this time we had tunneled twenty or thirty feet into the side of the mountain.

In the innocence of youth we had no idea of the risks we had been taking. Our parents were quick to explain to us how dangerous what we had been doing was. We never thought about the possibility of a cave-in or of its potentially fatal consequences. We had only thought of the adventure and excitement of being together.

Grounded from the "world of mining," we began to look for new things to do. We loved to build. We built a log cabin to play in. We built a beaver dam to swim in and a big swing. The swing was actually a sixty foot cable attached to a huge oak tree. You had to grab hold of the end of the cable with both hands and hang on tight while a couple of the other guys gave you a big push. Fortunately none us ever fell. If we

had, we would have fallen about one hundred feet down the mountainside.

We never worried about the many different kinds of snakes in the mountains around our homes. Neither did we worry about the swift rapids in the rivers nor the high rocky cliffs in the mountains. To us it was a paradise.

The mountains gave us life. There was one spot, especially, that was about a quarter of a mile in size. It was like a Garden of Eden to us. It was beautiful, with apple trees in the midst of it, and a mountain stream brimming with nice mountain trout. There were all kinds of nuts and berries for us to eat as well. And, oh yes, I cannot forget the bull frog pond at the foot of a huge beechnut tree whose branches always seemed to be reaching up to the heavens in praise to God.

You might be wondering what ever happened to all of us. Well, Homer became a track star in school, and then lost his life serving his country. Roosevelt also lost his life in the service. Rush was in the war, but he made it back. Richard never went into the service. I also was in the war. God smiled on me, and I also made it back.

It has been many years since the five of us roamed the hills together. I will never forget the joy of growing up in the mountains of West Virginia. To me, it wasn't "almost heaven" -- it *was* heaven.

Claude Berry

MY UNEXPECTED ADVENTURE

When I was graduated from Leningrad University I received an interesting offer. It was to attend Caucasus Sport Camp. It was interesting for me because my physical and sports abilities weren't suited for this trip.

I had never seen the Caucasus, and I had dreamed to see such sights. My mother had won some money in the lottery, and the "putevka" to the camp was not too expensive, so I was able to take the trip.

My trip to the Caucasus was unforgettable. Now I have seen not only the biggest mountains of Europe, but I had clambered up several peaks. I walked on glaciers and watched the panorama of the Great Caucasus Mountain Ridge.

Before our three-day cruise to the mountains, we had two weeks of training. We also studied theory and practice of survival.

At the end of my trip, I had a swim in the Black Sea. I was very tired from my travels but very happy. Many, many years have passed but I still remember this trip very clearly.

Klara Trusova

VIETNAM

Scenic, Tranquil

Raining, Worshiping, Farming

Love and miss it

Homeland

Kim Hai Tran

JOURNEY TO THE EDGE OF SURVIVAL

As a youngster growing up, I remember being very happy and looking forward to the many wonderful things life had to offer. It was my stepmother, Michi Bias, who gave me this outlook. She was truly a mother figure to me who gave me such strength and courage. She was a real inspiration to me, and I wanted to be just like her.

One special thing she did for us (my brother, Dewayne, and I) was to take us on a camping trip every summer. It gave us something to look forward to every year.

In the summer of 1978, it was very hot and humid when we got out of school for summer break. About ten of us were going camping that year -- three adults and seven children. We were all very excited and more than a little anxious to get to the campsite. But little did I know that we were about to embark on a journey that would take us to the edge of survival.

Upon arriving at the campsite, I remember looking around and thinking about how beautiful and peaceful it was. There were tall green trees everywhere. The trails were a jogger's paradise, and there were numerous campers of all sizes and shapes around us. The river's water was so peaceful; it was so pleasant to just gaze upon it. A feeling of excitement overtook us all. We immediately set up our sleeping tents, our miniature stove, and other miscellaneous items for the trip.

The next day, while the adults sat chatting, all the kids decided to explore the park. However, we were not aware of all the dangers that lay ahead of us. We came upon a beautiful waterfall. As we got nearer to the waterfall, we

noticed a rocky path across the top of it. It looked like it would be fun to try to walk across the top of the waterfall.

The older kids crossed first; then my younger brother and I followed. What happened next was just all too unreal. One minute my brother and I were walking on the rocks, when suddenly I slipped on some green moss and almost immediately found myself flying over the waterfall. The only thought I had going through my mind was "I can't die by myself." That was when I grabbed my brother and took him flying over the waterfall with me. What a frightening moment! I began to scream for help.

At the bottom of the waterfall was a raging river that seemed very angry. I knew that if something didn't happen before we hit the bottom of the waterfall, we would never survive the river below. About a quarter of the way down the waterfall my foot somehow slipped into a crevice in the rock behind the waterfall. I held onto my brother tightly, and we both screamed at the top of our lungs for help. The roar of the water was so loud that it took all our strength to yell loud enough for the others to hear us. But they did. The older kids came running back to where we had fallen. First they grabbed my brother and pulled him to safety. Then they were able to reach me and pull me up to my brother's side.

Once back on solid ground I remember feeling very frightened but relieved that we were safe. As I looked back over the waterfall, all I could see were the boisterous waves below me. I knew that if they had not been able to pull us to safety, we would have drowned that day. I also knew there had to have been a Higher Power looking after us that day. What could have been a tragedy turned into a triumph.

Since that day, I have learned that on the journey of life there are many snares, disappointments, and dangers lying in wait for us. However, with courage, strength, and help

from others, we can conquer anything in life -- through every tragedy there is also victory awaiting us on solid ground.

However, since that day, I have made it a point to not try to cross any more waterfalls!

Treva Jackson

Potpourri

MOONLIGHT – OUR SPIRIT – OUR FELINE FRIEND

Moonlight was born in the Animal Charities Shelter. Mark, the owner of our group home, picked him out of the litter and paid a donation of twenty dollars for him.

He was all black, even his nose, and had green eyes, yes green eyes. The only other mark on him was a sprig of white fur between his two front legs, right in the middle.

After his first month at the shelter Mark gave him to us. He put him in a Christmas shopping bag. When he got home, that shopping bag was passed around for all of us to see inside. Mark picked him up out of the bag and said, "Merry Christmas!"

He had all his shots, and he was spayed so we didn't have the turmoil of his going outside to look for a female.

He had this knack of going outside to do his business. Then he would come back to the side porch to nest in one of the chairs and keep us company. He let us know that he was thirsty and wanted his cold water. So I would go and take the bottle out of the refrigerator and put some into his bowl, and he really liked it.

He had the habit of jumping up onto the table to read the newspaper with you. It was also time to give him affection by petting him on his head, straight back to his tail. He would meow until he was satisfied. At night he would make his rounds by going by your door and meowing to check you in for the night. I would leave my door open, and he would jump up on my bed, curl up on my feet, and begin to purr very loudly. It was better than a sleeping pill. Pretty soon he would be asleep for the whole night, and so could you.

Then one night he saw a cat across Glenwood Avenue. Busy as it was, he made a crossing that ended his little life when a woman turned too sharply around the curb. We put him in his box and let him die there. We buried him outside under the tree. Moonlight was a spirit and a friend. We loved him.

Sandra Lee Sullivan

TELEPHONE, TELEPHONE

Telephone, telephone
Why do you ring?
You stop me from doing
All kinds of things.

While bathing and soaking
In the warm tub,
I hear you ring.
Talking, I love.

As I slip and slide
Down the long hall,
Knowing there is a chance
I could take a big fall.

Could it be Mary?
Could it be Jane?
I don't know
Who gives a dang?

So please don't stop.
I'm almost there.
So don't hang up.
I do really care.

Debbie Shepherd

FOREVER

Why do people think forever is long and far away!
Forever could be now, tomorrow, or maybe yesterday.
Forever is an expression for everlasting and thinking.
Forever will never come.
Forever could be as long as the birth of a child.
Or like snowflakes falling to the ground.
Maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm right.
Let the truth be told.
Forever could be in one night.

Constance Brown

THE DAY I WROTE SOMETHING BAD ON THE BOTTOM OF MY SHOES

When I was in fifth grade, I did a lot of doodling in class. One day I decided to write the F-you words on the bottom of my shoes. This is what happened.

My fifth grade teacher was boring and mean. I did not like him very much. One day in his class I sat at my desk and decided to write F-you on the bottom of both my shoes. I did it very artistically, making the letters bold and dark, because it might come off when I walk. I figured it was a safe place to write something so bad and never worry about getting caught.

About a week or so later, my mom told me we were going to the mall to buy new shoes. My mom, stepdad and I went to the mall. I was ready to get rid of my old sneakers, so I looked around the shoe store and found what I wanted. The shoe store man asked me, "What size do you wear?" I replied, "I don't know." He said, "Well, lift up your foot and let's take a look." That's when it hit me. I couldn't show him the bottom of my shoes. The man tried to pick my foot up to see my size, but I held my feet down tightly to the floor pushing as hard as I could. The shoe man thought I was being shy about my shoe size. The man reassured me there was nothing to worry about.

Little did he know that I had everything to be worried about. My mom told me to quit goofing around and show the man the bottom of my shoe so he could get my shoe size. The pressure was too much, and I knew there was no getting out of this one. So I slowly picked my foot up and showed the man. His eyes got real big and he said, "Oops!" putting my foot down really fast. I don't think he had time to see what size I needed.

It didn't matter at this point anyway for my mom and stepdad knew that I had something else on the bottom of my shoe. They looked at the bottom of my shoe and quickly we left the shoe store, without new shoes. They yelled from that point on until we got home. I was crying and pretty upset by this time.

My older sisters asked my mom what was wrong with me, but my mom just told them, "Never mind." Thinking my sisters would understand, I told them what had happened. They laughed so hard and couldn't believe what I did. They were wishing this was the one time they wouldn't have missed going to the mall.

To this day my sisters still tease me about my shoe ordeal, and to this day my mom still doesn't think it's funny. Mom will sure be proud of me now, writing essays on "the day I wrote a bad word on the bottom of my shoes!"

Kathy Gray

EYE OF THE STORM

You think everything is calm, quiet, and ok where you are,
but really you're in the eye of the storm.
You don't see everything that is right beside you,
you are so blind.
You want everything to be peaceful and you think it is,
but really you're just in the eye of the storm.
You're all alone in this world, no one cares and
no one understands just how you feel.
You wish on a falling star to find someone who will listen and
understand your hurt and pain.
You have to be strong and not feel sorry for yourself because
if you don't care no one else will.
As the winds blow past your face you want it to stop but
there's nothing you can do because
this is the tornado called
LIFE!

Amy Sheffield

A DAY REMEMBERED

September eleven, two thousand one.
Another day had just begun.

Nothing unusual as you might say.
It was just another working day.

Our flag was waving way up high;
Then came the planes out of the sky.

Terror came from up above
To take away so many loved.

It clearly was an act of terror.
It wasn't just a pilot's error.

As billowing flames and smoke abound
The giant Twins came tumbling down.

People on planes, their lives they gave
Let's not forget that they were brave.

To know the end was very near,
Their lives must have been filled with fear.

Firemen came, oh how brave!
They risked their lives for one they might save.

So many lost their lives that day.
The pain and sorrow are here to stay.

People came from far and near
To search for those they held so dear.

They lit candles as they came to wait
For word of loved ones, to learn their fate.

They caught us off guard and by surprise.
The giant awoke and opened its eyes.

They thought they had weakened us, but they were wrong.
They just succeeded in making us strong.

Our nation was angered by this unspeakable deed.
Now beware, enemy! You had better take heed!

We gathered together, united we stand.
We banded together to protect our land.

Defensive and angry our men went to war
To rid us of those that we strongly abhor.

We took freedom for granted before that day.
Now their acts threaten to take it away.

But once again our flag shall wave
For the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

Carol Rudder

Author Biographies

ABLE CLASS (p. 29)
The ABLE Class from Great Oaks Institute of Technical & Career Development has collaborated on a poem. Members of the class are Diane Freeman, Vickie Hargraves, Kum Sun Kim, Vickie Lewis, Hortencia Lynch, Rosalba McCain, Debbie Shepherd, Shin Young Welch, and Socorro Wood.

FUMIKO ADAIR (p. 57)
Hooray! I got lucky again! I was born and raised in Japan. I have lived in Ohio for 12 years. Still I have troubles in all areas of English, and people hardly understand my English speaking. I am also struggling to learn about special education, like what is the meaning of IDEA 20 U.S.C. §1400 for advocating for my daughter who has various diagnoses, such as PDD: Pervasive Developmental Disorder and VAA: Verbal Auditory Agnosia.

MELINDA BARNES (p. 75)
I am married to a wonderful man, and we have two beautiful children (Autumn, age 2, and Zachary, 5 months). I am going to Ravenna Even Start to get my GED.

CLAUDE BERRY (p. 97)
I was born in the beautiful hills of West Virginia and moved to Ohio in my teens. I have had a very long, full life. I began attending GED classes so I could be a help and example to my wonderful grandsons. Since I have been here I have been privileged to meet many great people. We have all learned from each other.

SARAH BLAIR (p. 9)
I am 22 years old. I have been writing since I was 11 years old. I like to write because it helps me get out all of my feelings, and it helps me express my feelings better.

ANGIE BLOOMFIELD (p. 83)

CONSTANCE BROWN (p. 110)
Constance was pleasantly surprised that her work "Forever" was selected for the *Beginnings* publication since she was just jotting down her thoughts. Constance is enrolled in the Cleveland Municipal Schools Even Start Program at Charles Lake School. She is the mother of three children. In addition to her interest in poetry, she is also interested in music, arts and crafts, and outdoor sports. Constance is expecting her first grandchild in May. The Brown family's creative flair will be passed on to another generation.

ROSE M. BUCKNER (p. 46)
Being a student in the ABLE Class at Live Oaks has been very rewarding for me. Writing has revived old memories of my high school days during the '40s at Milford High School, where I graduated in 1948. The encouragement I have received from my excellent teacher at Live Oaks has given me the inspiration to write again. I'm excited that my story was chosen.

JENNIFER BURLILE (p. 84)
I was born in London, Ohio. I am the proud mother of a two-year-old daughter, and I'm studying for my GED. I like poetry and reading.

TONSHAL BUTLER (p. 43)

LESLIE R. CARRIER (p. 32)

CHRIS CARTER (p. 4)
Chris has written many poems and has received previous awards for his work. He is now on his way to pursuing many goals in his life. Hopefully he will continue to write more poems and be recognized for them.

FLAVIO CENDERELLI (p. 86)
Flavio is from Italy. He came to the US in 1958. He was a sculptor until he retired. He likes to ride a bike in his free time and enjoys attending ESOL classes.

SLOWOMIV CHMIELEWSKI (p. 70)
Slowomiv was born in Poland. He came to the US five months ago with friends. He is single, and his favorite hobbies and interests are photography, reading and sports.

SUMAYA CLARIDGE (p. 85)
Sumaya is from Peru. She came to the US in February 2001. She and her husband are very happy because they are expecting a child in April.

JESSICA CRAWFORD (p. 42)
I am twenty-three years old and live in Dayton. I love studying. I enjoy writing and performing music. I plan to study computer science and to pursue a career in music. I try to surround myself with everything positive in life. I cherish my parents and am grateful for the help of my teachers.

MARIE DAVIS (p. 89)
I was married for thirty years, and I have two children and four grandchildren. My husband passed away twelve years ago. Since I have more time, I decided to go back to school to get my GED so I can get a better job. I am gaining more confidence!

BILLIE JO EAKLE (p. 41)
I am a single mother with a 3-year-old daughter. I work at DLH Industries to support her and me. I go to the learning center to get my GED. That's how I got the privilege to enter the essay contest and get it published.

LOUIS EATON (p. 51)
I am 33 years old. I'm trying to get my GED and my CDL's so I can make a better life for my wife and me. I have a son who is 9 years old who likes to whittle.

PHILIP EDWARDS (p. 93)

KATHLEEN FIELDS (p. 73)
I finished 12 years of school without enough credits to graduate. After 23 years of excuses not to go back to school, I finally did it. The thought of going back was more frightening than actually doing it. After I took that first step, it wasn't that bad. It's one small step at a time. My teacher, Deb Baker, helped me. Without her encouragement, I couldn't have done it.

SUSAN FISHER (p. 54)

PAULINE FOOR (p. 48)

MARION FORD (p. 11)
Marion spends her spare time attending art shows in her community and walking in Franklin Park, Columbus, feeding the ducks. She loves the outdoors and the sound of nature. Marion loves to see a sunset and a sunrise and most of all she loves the laughter of people of all ages. Marion decided to write this essay after a teacher said to her, "Yes, you can!"

KATHY GRAY (p. 111)
I am a 38-year-old single mother of 4 children, and we live in New London, Ohio. I worked hard to get my GED and was surprised when my teacher suggested I enter this essay for the writers' conference. Better yet, I was shocked when I was told that my essay was going to be published. I had to laugh in disbelief.

CSABA GREGOR (p. 87)
Csaba was born in Hungary. In August he came with his wife to Cleveland. He enjoys working with computers, especially designing web pages.

BARBARA S. HALL (p. 77)
I'm married and have three grown children and six grandchildren. I have lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, for the past ten years. My personal interests include gardening, cooking, bird watching, and studying world history. I'm presently enrolled in Managing Cosmetology at Western Hills School of Beauty and Hair Design.

VICKIE HARGRAVES (p. 62)
I am a 39-year-old mother of three children. I also have had entries published in the *Beginnings* books for the last four years. I love to write. I also love music and enjoy singing. I have God to thank for all.

ANGELA K. HENSLEY (p. 21)
I am 19 years old., and I like my writing to be funny. Bringing a smile to someone's face is a goal of mine. I like to sit and reflect on the old days. Writing about childhood brings a smile to my face.

PATRICIA HORTON (p. 22)
I am 24 years old and a single working mom. I have a 2-year-old son, Brandon. I am trying to get an evening job so I can come back to Even Start and work on my education.

TREVA JACKSON (p. 101)
I have six children, one handsome son and five beautiful girls. I was born in Pasadena, California, and have two brothers and four sisters.

VINCALITA KETCHAM (p. 30)
I am from Detroit, Michigan. I am sixteen years old and I have been through a lot these past two years.

KUM SUN KIM (p. 53)
I am a single mother of two daughters, and I am attending GED classes. I am very proud that the story about my grandfather is published.

SAGAT KOUCHKOUMBAEV (p. 87)
Sagat is from Russia. He came to the US in August 2002. He came here to compete in Kung Fu and decided to stay to study English. In Russia, Sagat taught physical education and coached.

CONG LUONG (p. 50)
I am a man who wishes to get a job as an operator AutoCAD. To prepare for it, I spent 2 years at Southern Ohio College and received my Associates' Degree. Life is not like my dream. It's very hard for me to get that job. I currently attend the Learning Center at Pierre Foods.

WENDY MARTIN (p. 52)

ARTHUR L. MASSENGILL (p. 35)
I was raised in Tennessee, moved to Ohio at the age of nineteen, found a job and got married. I have a son and daughter, a grandson and granddaughter that I adore. After retiring, I decided to go to school and work toward receiving a GED. I enjoy writing.

CHONG MAYNARD (p. 10)

TOREKA MILLER (p. 25)

REBECCA MOREHOUSE (p. 60)
I am a 38-year-old mother of two wonderful children, Danyelle who is 18 and Johnny who is 9. Writing has always been a passion of mine, which I hope to pass on to my kids. It is never too late to do better. I have been going to school since October of 2001 and plan to get my GED in April 2002. I would never be able to do any of this without the support of my family and friends.

REBECCA MULDREW (p. 16)
I am 32 years old. I was born in Prescott, Arkansas, and now live in Dayton. I am the proud mother of four. I enjoy going to church, singing in the church choir, and playing basketball. Even though I have had a drug problem, I still try to do what's right. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.

BRANDI MURPHY (p. 76)
I am a single mother of a 3 1/2-year-old son. I got my GED at the Even Start Program. I enjoy dancing, the outdoors, and walking outside. Since I earned my GED, I am going to further my education by going to a beauty school to become a cosmetologist. Having my work recognized has been so exciting for me.

BEN NAIDZNSKI (p. 12)

SHALISA NASH (p. 56)
I'm a 25-year-old mother of four daughters. When finished getting my GED, I plan on going to college to become a dental hygienist.

ANH PHUONG NGUYEN (p. 45)
I am working at Pierre Foods and a student at the Learning Center. I joined the Learning Center to improve my English, reading, and writing so I could pass my GED test. Finally, I accomplished this goal and passed it in December 2001.

ROMAN OSTROWSKI (p. 88)
Roman is from Poland. He came to the US in 1994. He is interested in science, social studies, and many kinds of sports. He enjoys exercising. He skis, swims, and plays table tennis and volleyball. Roman is active in the Senior Olympics in the Greater Cleveland area.

AMY PERRY (p. 23)
I am twenty years old and have been coming to GED classes since October 2001. After I get my GED I plan to go to college in Colorado. I am a member of SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving). The poem is dedicated to my father who was killed by a drunk driver on June 12, 1993.

ANTHONY C. PORTER (p. 6)
Anthony Porter was born in Cleveland, Ohio, attended Glenville High School, and received his diploma through an alternative educational program. He attended Cuyahoga Community College for two quarters while working part time in various jobs. A substance abuse problem consumed a good portion of his early years, and it wasn't until he conquered his addictions that a whole new life emerged. After some counseling at the One Stop Career Center in Cleveland, it was suggested that he attend an adult education class to upgrade his math and communication stills. His referral brought him to the Cleveland ABLE program at CWRU where he is currently preparing to re-enter CCC and pursue an associate degree in Human Applied Science with a specialty in chemical dependency.

AMY POWELL (p. 27)
I'm 24 years old. I have 2 children, and I'm expecting another child. Getting my GED is a must for me. In my spare time, I enjoy writing poems and spending time with my family.

CAROL RADCLIFF (p. 71)
Carol loves to spend time with her mother, sister and brother. Her priorities are to reach goals in life of satisfaction to her. Thanks to the help and determination of peers, teachers and family, she is heading towards success.

VICTORIA RENDEROS (p. 33)
I've been writing since the age of fifteen. I love to write poetry. When things are hard and life gets tough, that's what I turn to. "Dark Heart" was written in my teenage years. It means trapped in a life that one doesn't understand. It also means, "Never let your dreams go, and always follow your heart." Don't put chains and locks on life.

CAROL RUDDER (p. 114)
Carol was born in Canada. She moved to the United States when she was five years old. Currently she has two children, four grandchildren and one great grandchild. Carol works at Pierre Foods, Inc., in Cincinnati, Ohio. Carol enjoys going to our Learning Center and also enjoys working in her yard.

VIKTOR SAYEVYCH (p. 86)
Viktor is from the Ukraine. He came to the US three years ago. He is married and is a truck driver for a local company.

AMY SHEFFIELD (p. 113)

DEBBIE SHEPHERD (p. 109)
I am forty-eight years old and a high school dropout. I dropped out of school at a very young age. I am now attending my second year of ABLE classes at Live Oaks. Thanks to my wonderful teacher, I feel I may have a chance.

DALE D. SHERMAN (p. 64)

MASTAN SINGH (p. 85)
Mastan is from India. He came to the US in 1991. He works full time at a plastics factory. Besides ESOL classes, Mastan also attends citizenship classes.

KAREN SMITH (p. 24)
I am a divorced mother of two very special girls, Cynthia who is 12 and Angelica who is 5. This is my 5th time in Beginnings.

SANDRA LEE SULLIVAN (p. 107)
I am living in a group home since I had a nervous breakdown. I have two children ages 26 and 23. My family is very important to me. I attend the Glenwood Center in Youngstown. I have been coming to class since February 2000. I enjoy coming to class.

PAM TOLLEY (p. 38)
I come from a small town named Crooksville, Ohio. I've lived here for 32 years. I am 37 years old, the mother of one son, and I am happily married to a wonderful man. I am currently going to school to get my GED. I decided to go back to school to prove to myself that I can graduate no matter how old I am. I want to be a teachers aide in my son's school. I really enjoy working with children. I volunteered a lot last year in my son's kindergarten class. That's when I knew what I wanted to do for a living.

KIM HAI TRAN (p. 100)
I came to the US in 1997. I attend the Learning Center at Pierre Foods to improve my English. I love reading, cooking, and watching movies.

KLARA TRUSOVA (p. 99)
I was born and grew up in Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Russia. After my education, I became a chemistry teacher and researcher. In 1993 I arrived in Youngstown, Ohio, to be living near my daughter and her family. I could not speak English (my second language is German) and started to study at The English Center. Since January 2000 I have been an American citizen.

GLORIA TURNER (p. 69)

AMANDA VASBINDER (p. 14)
As long as I can remember, I have written to communicate my feelings to the world. At fifteen, my mother passed away and, for a couple of years, I was lost. Three years later, at eighteen, I met a wonderfully odd man who helped me to see that although my mother's time here was over, mine was not. At twenty-one now, I am currently a stay-at-home mother to my fiance's five-year-old daughter (whom I love more than the world) and am seriously contemplating the thought of pursuing a writing career.

RUSSELL WALKER (p. 74)
I was born in Holly Spring, Mississippi, and lived there for eighteen years. I was drafted into the US Navy in 1943. I served two years in World War II. When I came home, I married and planted crops like cotton, corn, peanuts, watermelon, and sugar cane. I had a friend in Ohio. He wrote to me and told me to come on up here, that I would be able to work in one of the rubber shops. That was good news to a cotton-picking man. So I boarded the train and came to Akron. I went to work for General Tire & Rubber Co. I worked there for thirty years and retired. My dream has come true when I found Project: LEARN.

GINA WELLSPRING (p. 34)
I am 35 years old, and I have three girls. I enjoy reading, writing, and spending time with my family and friends. I hope to someday write an autobiography about my life and to get it published.

JUDELEENA WENNING (p. 44)
I'm 27 years old, and I attend Lathrop Even Start Adult Education classes in Canton, Ohio. I have three children--Stephanie, 8, Timothy, 5, and Michael, 4. My greatest goal is to obtain my GED so I can go to college and get a good job.

SOCORRO WOOD (p. 3)
I am a married, proud Mexican mother of two beautiful girls, believer 100% of love, and because of that, I am in this country learning the new language and loving its people.

Honorable Mention Authors

Howaida Abdel-Shaheed
Maya Alishaeva
Raquel R. Araujo
Daniela Arghir
Lucian Arghir
Karlissa Bady
Lamont Bailey
Tanja Barleska
Richard Barnes
Bryan E. Barrett
Ann Bennett
Tisha Bennett
John J. Berling
Yolanda Bonilla
Rondia Botts
Dan K. Boyt
Nada Brkic
Glenda L. Burt
Sharon Butcher
Vesna Cecez
Vittoria Cenderelli
John Champion
Anna Chernyuk
Michael Chillog
Hyeon P. Choi
Nancy Clapper
Brian Coffman
Angie Cottrill
Tiffany Cundiff
Rodney DeFrance
Jiyen Dent
Dragana Dimitrijevic
Lawana Ford
Barbara A. Fortin
Nicole Frederick
Kimberly Fritz
Alexander Galanin
Tsylya Gurvich
Jackie Head
Natosha Hodges
Lattrice Hodges
John Holmes III
Katrina Horton
Karla Howard
Robert Imri
Shasta Jack
Dianne Jefferys
Misty Keyes
Pellumbesha Kico
Dhimitraq Kico
Hyunhee Kim
Chizuko Kobayashi
Mimoza Kodra
Lakshmi Koralla
Karol Kubasek
Mahammed Kutubuddin
Virginia Lawrence
Crystal Leal
Alexa Lee
Marcus Lewis
Pauneese Lewis
Michelle Lowe
Dung Le Ly
Thanh Ly

Jennifer Lyons
Maria Marrero
Anna S. Mata
Rashawn McDade
Jill McDaniel
Tatsuko McKee
Elizabeth Meighen
Luba Miktuk
Alma Miller
Natalie Miller
Ildiko Molnar
Cheryl Morales
Matthew Mueller
Renate Mueller
Ysabel Naider
Charles Newlan
Ida E. Osborn
Milan Pejic
Jackie Peterson
Catherine A. Phillips
Regina Pool
Mary Price
Randa Rhoades
Anthony Ridener
Natalya Rozenberg
Tim Ruffin
Weymouth Sanders
Candice Seales
Maheshwari Shah
Patrick Shanahan
Sherry Shaw
Lyudmila Shilo
Lynda Smienski
James Smith
Dale Stewart
Gabriella Szabo
Sherry L. Tennant
Linda Torres
Rocita Turner
Valentina Vaduva
Vencel Varga
Andrea Walls
Connie Webb
Richard Webb
Verlina White
Tanisha Williams
Van Williams
Aleksandr Yavorskiy
Tammy Young
Doris Zene

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